

Chapter 5

General View for Investigative Interviewing of Children: Investigative Interviewing

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to summarize the development of investigative interviewing of children especially in the UK and Turkey to give short information about the methods which have been implemented by police officers during interviews. The role of the interviewers during the interview will be outlined and some information will be given about children as witnesses. This book chapter will also express the risks and difficulties of conducting interviews with children. Moreover, it will be briefly underlined the harmful effects of re-interviewing of children. All these subjects were examined comprehensively Interviewing is at the heart of any police investigation and thus is the root of achieving justice in society.

INTRODUCTION

Each year, increasing numbers of children come into contact with legal systems, social services, and child welfare systems around the world (Malloy, La Rooy, Lamb and Katz (2011, p.2). It is believed that large numbers of children are victims of abuse. For example, NSPCC & Tower Hamlets ACPC (1996) reports that a total of 1 million children in the UK are abused each year (Aldridge & Wood, 1998, p.9). In the US. children were reported to be abused or neglected at a rate of 10.6 per thousand children in 2007, resulting in an estimated 794,000 victims (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009 as cited in Mongetta, Salerno, Najdowski, Bottoms & Goodman, 2009, p. 2). Forward and Buck (1978) claimed that between 10 and 20 million Americans are victims of abuse (Brown, Goldstein & Bjorklund, 2000, p. 15).

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It is difficult to determine why some children are more susceptible to abuse than others. Several factors put children at risk particularly for sexual victimization. Social isolation is a primary reason. "Children who are left alone, are unsupervised, and who do not have the physical presence of numerous friends and neighbours are more likely to be abused" (Sgroi, 1982; Finkelhor, 1984). Also, the mother has an influence on the child's vulnerability. Studies show that the mother "who is absent, who is not close to her child emotionally, who is sexually punitive or religiously fanatic, who never finished high school, or who keeps herself isolated is more likely to have a child who will be abused" (Sgroi, 1982; James and Nasjleti, 1983; Finkelhor, 1984 as cited in Tower, 1999, p.126). Additionally, children with disabilities (physical limitations or emotional disturbances) are particularly vulnerable to victimization (Young, 1982 as cited in Tower, 1999, p. 127).

Children are interviewed not only as a victim but also as a suspect of crime. In the US. in 2000, 2.4 million juveniles (17 years or younger) were formally arrested, 32% (758,208) of whom were aged 14 years and younger (Snyder, 2002 as cited in Redlich, Silverman, Chen & Steiner, 2004, p.107). In Turkey there has been an increase in the ratio of children who have been driven into crime in recent years. While the number of children who came into contact with criminal justice system in 2010 was 83.393, this number reached 115.439 in 2013 (Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) 2014 report). The aim of this chapter is to summarize the development of investigative interviewing of children especially in the UK, and to provide information about innovative methods which have been implemented by police officers during the interview process. The role of the interviewers during the interview will be described and some information will be given about children as witnesses. This chapter will also discuss the risks and challenges of conducting interviews with children. Moreover, the harmful effects of re-interviewing of children will be explored.

INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEWING

Investigative interviewing also known forensic interviewing is a method of communicating with anyone within the investigation process in order to obtain the maximum quality of information (Milne & Powell, 2010, p. 208).

The purpose of an investigative interview is to ascertain the witness's account of the alleged event(s) and any other information that would assist the investigation (Great Britain. Home Office, 2011, p. 10). There are two key aims underpinning any investigation and these are to learn what happened, and if anything did happen, to discover who did it (Milne and Bull 2006 as cited in Milne & Powell, 2010, p. 208). The success of the criminal justice system relies critically on the accuracy of eyewitness testimony. On the one hand, for many crimes, such as physical assault or sexual assault eyewitness testimony is often key to the prosecution of guilty suspects. Without reliance on eyewitness reports, murderers, rapists or child abusers might go free to perpetrate further crimes. On the other hand, inaccurate eyewitness testimony can lead to the conviction of an innocent person and the possibility of a prison sentence (Ghetti, Schaaf, Qin & Goodman, 2004, pp. 513, 514). Interviewing is at the heart of any police investigation and thus is the basis of achieving justice in society (Milne, Shaw & Bull, 2007, p. 65). Gudjonsson (2006, p.123) states that investigative interviews are an important form of evidence gathering. Thus, interview techniques employed by police officers are the focus of much research.

Police officers regularly conduct interview with adults but also with children. It has been suggested (Paterson, 2001, p. 15) that over the last few decades the capabilities of child witnesses have been of great

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